



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

A long history of healthcare firsts

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Image: Carter Hall, which housed the nursing school until 1962. Courtesy Alexandria Hospital.

The Northern Virginia area is known for being at the forefront of firsts in our great nation. What many Alexandrians may not realize is that many of the firsts in healthcare occurred at their local community hospital, Inova Alexandria.

Alexandria Hospital, now known as Inova Alexandria Hospital, was founded in 1872 by a determined group of women led by Julia Johns. Known as the Board of Lady Managers, the group ran the first established hospital in Northern Virginia until its merger with Inova in 1996. The rapid expansion of the hospital required it to change locations frequently in the second half of the 19th century.

In 1894, Alexandria Hospital established the first School of Nursing in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The School of Nursing was continually ranked as the top Virginia nursing school throughout its 93 years of operation.

This was not the last of Alexandria Hospital's firsts in the area or in the eastern United States. In fact, Alexandria hospital was the first hospital on the East Coast to institute the use of epidurals in obstetrics in 1953.

In 1961, it became the first hospital in the nation to staff an around-the-clock Emergency Department. That operating plan is now known as the "Alexandria Plan."

More recently, Alexandria Hospital was the first Cancer Center in Northern Virginia to be accredited by the American College of Surgeons for its comprehensive oncology program in 1989. Other recent firsts in Northern Virginia have been the 2001 acquisition of a highly sophisticated Infant and Child Abduction Security Monitoring system, and the 2005 certification from the Joint Commission/American Heart Association Stroke Center.

Just last year, Inova Alexandria Hospital continued this great list of firsts by being the first hospital in the Mid-Atlantic region, and only the fourth in the country, to receive the Thrombectomy-Capable Stroke Center certification from the Joint Commission, American Heart Association and American Stroke Association.

Inova Alexandria Hospital plans continue to grow this list of healthcare firsts and to always provide exceptional patient care to the Alexandria community, as it has since 1872.



"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.



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